



THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY

1230 YORK AVENUE · NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10021

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT



26 August 1980

Memorandum for the Record

Subject: Whitehead Institute and Lew Thomas

On August 15, Lew Thomas telephoned me to ask for background about Jack Whitehead's current planning. Lew said that Jack had called to ask for a quiet conversation and that a private dinner session had been arranged for the evening of August 18. This memo covers my "backgrounder" for Lew and his report on the results of the dinner.

1. Background

Because Lew Thomas had not been recently or broadly informed about JL's explorations with Whitehead, I went over all of the detail in the course of a telephone conversation that lasted about 30 minutes. I urged him to do a lot of listening rather than any "negotiating" on our behalf. He agreed.

I also emphasized that Lew should feel free to give his own views--as an individual trustee of RU--about establishing any Whitehead enterprise on our campus.

Generally, Lew felt that a subordinate institute would be much healthier in the long run. I gather that he also felt that using air rights, or the Tower Building, would make more sense than dedicating one of the two parcels of real estate on York Avenue. Thus, Lew intuitively agreed with the general conclusions of our Executive Committee and the Academic Council.

2. Results

Lew telephoned after the dinner with Jack Whitehead and reported on Jack's mood and aims. Both Jack Whitehead and his son John attended the dinner and no one else was present. The occasion was "pleasant" according to Lew.

Jack was deeply worried that JL and the RU Board would "turn him off"--and Jack definitely does not want to go to either Boston or Palo Alto. For reasons that Jack never made completely clear to Lew, RU is strongly the first choice.

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In addition, Jack is worried about the RU faculty's reservations; and he apparently has "seen the light" (according to Lew) about why all of his past negotiations with leading institutions have floundered on several issues having to do with faculty appointments. Accordingly, Jack believes that it is important to have a firm commitment for the new director of the Whitehead enterprise and then have this person negotiate everything with RU. In Jack's judgement, if the director were David Baltimore, for example, all of the negotiations would be held in a way that would probably satisfy RU--and Lew Thomas told Jack that this would probably be the case.

Furthermore, and probably most important, Jack hinted strongly that the Whitehead enterprise could be subordinate to the RU president and Board, if the new director felt that this was the best long-run model.

Jack was looking forward to his planned meeting with JL on September 17. Presumably, Jack will expect RU to have some reasonably firm "indications" of our planning by that time.

Jack Whitehead also said he would be interested in providing some support to joint clinical research efforts between Memorial, SKI, and the RU.



Rodney W. Nichols

cc: ✓ Joshua Lederberg

Whitehead file